

Message Text

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SUBJECT: NON-CONFORMIST ART EXHIBIT OPENS OFFICIALLY IN MOSCOW

1. SUMMARY. EXHIBIT OF WORKS OF NON-CONFORMIST MOSCOW ARTISTS OPENED SUCCESSFULLY, BUT WITH COMPLAINTS FROM ARTISTS ABOUT SIZE AND ISOLATED LOCATION OF EXHIBIT HALL AND MEASURES TAKEN BY MILITIA TO CONTROL SPECTATORS WAITING TO GET IN. MOST UNOFFICIAL ARTISTS VIEWED EVENT AS POSITIVE DEVELOPMENT IN THEIR ATTEMPTS TO GAIN GREATER FREEDOM TO EXHIBIT WORKS MORE OPENLY. ARTISTS HAVE MADE OFFICIAL REQUEST TO USSR MINISTER OF CULTURE FOR ANOTHER MUCH LARGER EXHIBIT IN MARCH. END SUMMARY.

2. ART EXHIBIT WITH WORKS OF SOME TWENTY LEADING NON-CONFORMIST ARTISTS FROM MOSCOW OPENED AT 11:00 A.M. FEBRUARY 19 IN "BEEKEEPING HALL" ON GROUNDS OF CITY'S EXHIBITION OF NATIONAL ECONOMIC ACHIEVEMENTS(VDNKH). MOST SPECTATORS AT OPENING HAD TO WALK ABOUT TWO MILES FROM NEAREST BUS STOP ON VDNKH GROUNDS TO EXHIBIT HALL, WHICH IS LOCATED IN ISOLATED AREA AND SURROUNDED BY OTHER BUILDINGS CLOSED FOR THE WINTER. MILITIAMEN AND VOLUNTEERS WERE STRUNG OUTT ALONG ROUTE TO GUIDE SPECTATORS, MANY OF WHOM, ON REACHING SITE, HAD TO WAIT IN LINE FOR THIRTY MINUTES OR SO. IN FACT, SOME ARTISTS WHOSE WORKS WERE BEING EXHIBITED BUT WHO ARRIVED LATE, WERE ALSO FORCED TO WAIT IN
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LINE, DESPITE PROTESTS TO MILITIA. SINCE TWO-ROOM HALL CAN

ONLY ACCOMMODATE ABOUT 150-200 COMFORTABLY, MILITIA ALLOWED GROUPS OF PEOPLE IN ONLY AFTER CERTAIN NUMBER HAD LEFT, AND ASKED VIEWERS TO LIMIT STAY TO 30 MINUTES. CROWD OF ABOUT 200 WAITING TO ENTER HALL GRUMBLED AND COMPLAINED TO MILITIA, ESPECIALLY ABOUT FACT THAT NEITHER ARTISTS NOR DIPLOMATS AND FOREIGN JOURNALISTS WERE ALLOWED TO JUMP LINE, BUT MUCH OF THIS WAS GOOD NATURED. SEVERAL MENTIONED TO EMBOFF PRESENT THAT ROPING-OFF OF WAITING AREA AND USE OF BULL HORNS TO CONTROL CROWD WAS CERTAIN TO CREATE "BAD IMPRESSION."

3. EXHIBIT ITSELF IS OF HIGH QUALITY, WITH NUMBER OF INTERESTING ABSTRACT AND SURREALISTIC PAINTINGS NOT NORMALLY SEEN OFFICIALLY IN MOSCOW. SHOW WAS ORGANIZED BY CITY COMMITTEE OF GRAPHIC ARTISTS (GORKOM), A TRADE UNION ORGANIZATION, AFTER GOOD DEAL OF PRESSURE FROM ARTISTS INVOLVED. NUMBER OF ARTISTS WHO ORIGINALLY PLANNED TO PARTICIPATE DROPPED OUT AT LAST MINUTE, AND GORKOM ADDED SEVERAL WORKS OF ITS OWN "LEFT" ARTISTS TO FILL UP WALLS. ALL PARTICIPATING ARTISTS WERE AUTOMATICALLY MADE MEMBERS OF GORKOM.

4. ONCE THROUGH INITIAL UNPLEASANTRIES, ARTISTS AND THEIR FRIENDS EXPRESSED PLEASURE WITH EXHIBIT AND CHANCE TO SHOW THEIR WORKS. THEY HAVE BEEN TOLD EXHIBIT WILL RUN FOR ONE WEEK AND WILL BE OPEN EIGHT HOURS EACH DAY. MAIN COMPLAINTS WERE ABOUT SMALL SIZE OF HALL AND ITS ISOLATED LOCATION. GENERALLY, HOWEVER, THEY FELT EXHIBIT IS A STEP IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION.

5. LEADING UNOFFICIAL ARTIST, OSKAR RABIN, TOLD EMBOFF FEB 18 THAT HE FELT AUTHORIZATION OF EXHIBIT WAS POSITIVE STEP BUT THAT NEED TO LIMIT NUMBER OF PARTICIPATING ARTISTS HAD CAUSED SOME DISSENSION AND ARGUMENTS IN UNOFFICIAL ART CIRCLES. RABIN SHOWED EMBOFF COPY OF LETTER RECENTLY SENT BY SEVERAL UNOFFICIAL ARTIST TO USSR MINISTER OF CULTURE DEMICHEV WHICH REQUESTS ANOTHER MUCH LARGER EXHIBIT WITH NATIONWIDE PARTICIPATION IN MARCH. ARTISTS ASK THAT EXHIBIT, AFTER OPENING IN MOSCOW, BE ALLOWED TO MOVE AROUND TO COUNTRY'S MAJOR CITIES. RABIN SAID ONLY RESPONSE FROM MINISTRY THUSFAR WAS THAT MATTER BEING "STUDIED."

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6. COMMENT: DESPITE FACT THAT CONDITIONS OF EXHIBIT ARE NOT IDEAL, EVENT IS ANOTHER CLEAR WIN FOR NON-CONFORMIST ARTISTS IN RUNNING BATTLE WITH CULTURAL AUTHORITIES FOR GREATER FREEDOM TO EXHIBIT THEIR WORKS OPENLY. MARCH EVENT, IF IT OCCURS ON SCALE ARTISTS ENVISAGE, WOULD BE EVEN MORE SIGNIFICANT.
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